



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
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NEWS RELEASE

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RIDE Selects Seven Programs as Sites for Prekindergarten Project

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) announced today, July 29, 2009, the seven programs that will be the sites for the Rhode Island Prekindergarten Demonstration Project this fall.

The sites are:

- Central Falls School Department @ Progreso Latino;
- Beautiful Beginnings, Providence;
- Highlander Charter School, Providence;
- Ready to Learn Providence;
- Providence Center/Imagine Preschool, Warwick;
- Westbay Community Action Children's Center, Warwick; and
- Woonsocket Head Start.

The project, which RIDE will run in partnership with Rhode Island Kids Count, will be the first state-supported program offering high-quality early-childhood education for 4-year-old children.

"We know that providing a quality prekindergarten education improves academic performance amongst children, especially in urban areas," said Governor Donald L. Carcieri. "This innovative program is an important step in our commitment to close the achievement gap in our urban areas by providing our children early on with the resources to succeed."

The current (FY 2010) education budget includes \$700,000 in funding for the project. In addition, the Central Falls School Department is funding one classroom and the Providence School Department is funding two classrooms, at a total cost of about \$300,000.

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“Though Rhode Island has made progress in recent years, we must address the inequities that contribute to our achievement gaps,” said Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Esq., Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. “One of our greatest inequities has been the lack of access to high-quality prekindergarten education in our urban districts. This project marks a major step toward closing that gap.”

“The lack of high-quality early-childhood education is a ‘preparation gap’ that, if uncorrected, can lead to achievement gaps when children enter school,” said Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “RIDE will ensure that, during the pilot phase and beyond, these Pre-K programs maintain high standards.”

“A recent report from Rhode Island Kids Count showed that Rhode Island ranked only 27th regarding percent of children in preschool,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, executive director of Rhode Island Kids Count. “The research is definitive. Preschool education for children in poverty prepares them for kindergarten and is one of the best ways to close the achievement gaps.”

The seven programs will enroll children through a lottery process. Children must be 4 years old by September 1st to enter the Pre-K programs. Families in Central Falls, Providence, Warwick, and Woonsocket, where the seven programs are located, may apply for admission of their children beginning August 5, 2009. Applications will be available at each individual location as well as the Rhode Island Department of Education website (www.ride.ri.gov).